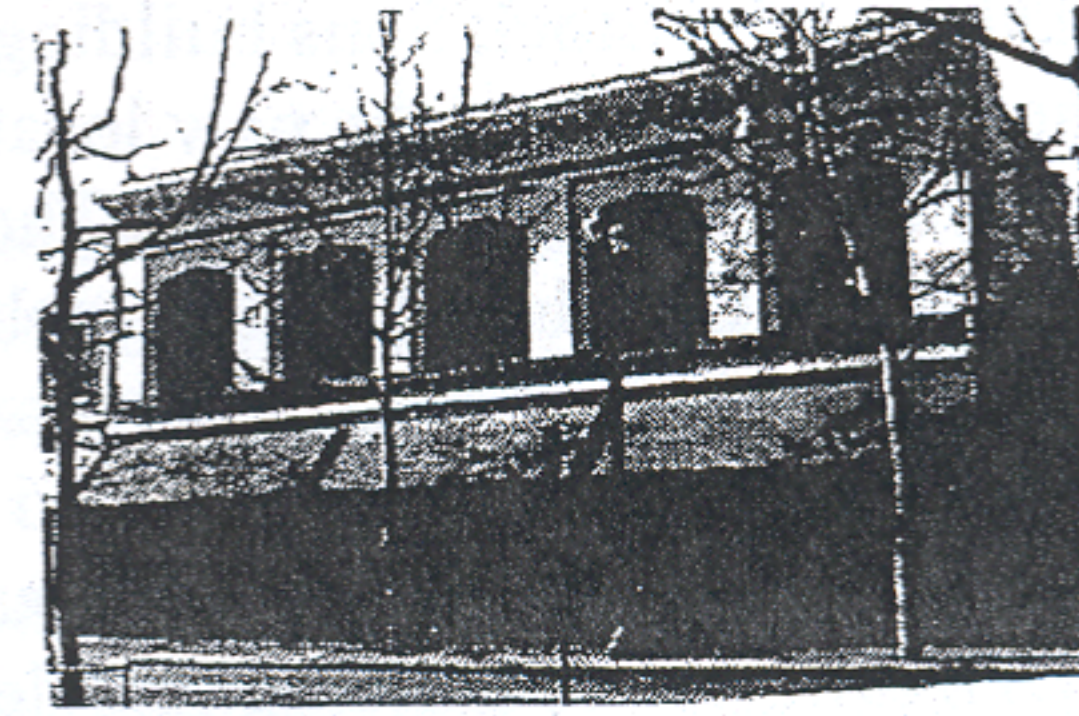


3. (Evaluated)

| | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Block & Range | B1R1N |
| Property Address | 83-91 South First Street |
| Assessors Parcel Number | 259-40-063 |
| Common Name | None |
| Historic Name | Porter Stock Building |
| Date of Construction | 1866/1867 |

**Historical Background**

Henry J. Haskell, C.S. Crydenwise, and D.J. Porter purchased the property in 1852. It was on this lot that Haskell and Porter started their early San José wagon and carriage factory and blacksmith shop shortly after California statehood (Guinn 1904). Prior to that time, the property was in the immediate vicinity of St. Joseph's Church, located directly to the rear of the church which was first constructed in 1803, shortly after the second site of the *Pueblo de San José* was established. The first church was of frame construction, and by 1835 an adobe structure had been constructed. By 1850, the north half of Lot 13 of B1R1N, which encompassed the corner parcel including the subject property, was owned by Richard M. May and had improvements valued at \$5,000 in the tax assessment records. All that is known about May is that he served as First Alcalde of the pueblo between August and November 1849. When Haskell, Crydenwise, and Porter purchased the property, improvements were valued at \$1,750.

The business operated out of the circa 1850s building until the current two-story building with addresses ranging from 83 through 91 South First Street was built 1866\1867 by Henry J. Haskell and Daniel J. Porter. The two-story brick building had 69 feet of frontage on First Street and was 90 feet deep. The two men carried on a livery business in what was called the "Grey Eagle Building" (386 First Street) until 1869 when they sold the business to W.O. Barker and Jeremiah B. Church (Foote 1888); however, Haskell and Porter maintained ownership of the building after this sale. Between 1862 and 1868, Porter was a member of the San José City Council. During his term, he was active in retaining city ownership of Alum Rock Park, the Normal School site (now San José State University), and the City Hall site (formerly Market Plaza, now known as Plaza de César Chavez). Porter and Haskell operated their livery stable business until 1869 when Porter went into the insurance business and Haskell moved the blacksmith portion of the business. By 1870, W.O. Barker had sold his interest in the livery business on the ground floor of this building to Robert Wallace. Wallace operated the Grey Eagle Stable solely and with various partners until 1892. The upper floor of the building was used as a print shop for several San José newspapers. From 1874 to about 1877, it housed the *San Jose Patriot*, followed by the *San Jose Herald* in 1878. In the early 1880s, John Conmy operated a print shop at this location, followed by the McNeil Bros Printing and Publishing House in 1884. In 1892, the Grey Eagle Building became known as the Porter Stock Building, Haskell's interest having been bought out by John Stock, owner of the Stock building at 71-77 South First Street. The building was remodeled extensively at this time, the lower floor being converted to retail space. J. Nash Cloaks and Suits, was located at 83 South First Street. The upper floor, 85 South First Street, was remodeled into office suites. D.J. Porter & Son maintained their office upstairs. The other upper floor offices were rented to a variety of businesses, including dressmakers, dentists, opticians and realtors.

A.H. Marten came to San José in 1872, founding The Arcade, a dry goods house, in 1879. In 1893, The Arcade relocated from 14-16 North First Street to the Porter Stock Building at 87-91 South First Street. Alterations occurred to the second floor of the building at this time, designed by Jacob Lenzen & Son architects, Dexter & Woehl, contractors, at a cost of \$2,800. The Arcade was a well-known business in San José and advertised profusely in newspapers of the time. A.H. Marten retired in 1907, selling the

business to Canelo Bros & Stackhouse Company. The Arcade had been destroyed by a fire, either a result of the 1906 Earthquake or shortly thereafter. Jacob Lenzen was also the architect for this rebuilding of the structure, which was completed in about March of 1908 at a cost of \$22,000. About 1911, D.A. Porter moved to Los Angeles and sold the remaining Porter interest in the building to John Stock. John Stock died in 1916, and his heirs continued to manage the building as part of the John Stock Trust. The Arcade continued to occupy retail space in this building after rebuilt in 1908 until 1933, during the Depression, when they went out of business, at a time when many of the neighboring businesses also closed. Later tenants of note were Cannon Shoe Store at #87, Sherman Clay at #89, and Dundee's Men's Clothing at #91. Later, Proctor's Jewelers replaced Dundee's at #91. The upstairs continued to be used for photography studios as well as dental and real estate offices. Sherman Clay's Musical center (instrument repair and lessons) also occupied upstairs space at one time. By the early 1970s, however, use of the upstairs offices was discontinued.

Description

A two-story building with addresses ranging from 83 through 91 South First Street, this structure extends approximately 69 feet in width and 138 feet in depth and sits on the west side of South First Street between Post and West San Fernando Streets.

A two-story façade rises at the front property line. The upper portions of this façade, a Neo-classical design in the Italian Renaissance style, match that shown in a 1909 photo of the building, taken during a parade on July 4, 1909 (Sutton 1909). The interior was remodeled or replaced in 1908 in conjunction with the façade remodeling/replacement.

The upper portion of this symmetrical façade is of brick construction (as are all the perimeter walls) with the outer brick course of the façade faced with white glazing. This white glazing is currently hidden under paint. The upper façade is segmented into five bays framed by pilasters that rise to a wide entablature. This entablature includes an architrave, frieze and cornice. The cornice has a row of modillions, above a dentil course, that bracket the corona (top ledge). Coupled one over one double-hung windows are recessed within the five bays and each set is topped by a relieving arch over a solid panel that crowns the windows. Featured within each of these panels is a *rinseau*, a plaster relief of a lion's head surrounded by intertwined foliage.

Below this classically designed façade are three storefronts constructed of a mix of modern materials. The transom area above the storefronts, which extends upwards to the base of the second story windows, is currently plastered solid and covered by awnings. It cannot be determined by visual inspection whether the original building envelope remains under this plaster.

The first floor interior is contemporary in style, and no original floor or wall details are extant. The original ornamental tin ceiling appears to be intact above the suspended ceilings. The panels contain a repeating four-leaf clover pattern and are heavily ornamented with scroll designs. Light penetrates the second story of the building via a skylight over the central corridor of the second floor and originally brought light to the retail sales floors below through a glass block section of the floor.

The second floor is accessed from a street front door and a single flight of interior stairs located at the north end of the building. An additional set of stairs is located at the rear but does not provide exterior access. This interior stairway is accessible at the ground floor at the rear of the middle storefront space. Both stairways are characterized by turned wood balusters and corner newel posts with flat caps. The room at the top of the stairs at the rear of the building has windows facing out over the one-story portion of the building at its northwest corner. A skylight tops this small one-story area, as well as a matching area at the southwest corner of the building.

The second floor consists of small internally connected offices. A row of these offices is located behind the façade. A T-shaped corridor system joins them to the rear with a large central corridor running perpendicular to the street. Three skylights above the corridors bring natural light into the interior of the building. The offices along the central corridor have single-pane etched glass windows that bring light in from the corridors. The windows are hinged at the bottom and tilt inward. The office doors are circa turn-of-the-century horizontal panel doors with top glass panels and have operable transom windows above.

Interior finishes consist of plaster walls trimmed with flat boards. The window and door openings are grouped and topped by crown molding. Horizontal chair and picture molding wrap the spaces, but there is no evidence of original wallpapering, painting, or flooring finish, as the spaces have been stripped of flooring and the walls uniformly covered with muted green paint.

The construction of the building consists primarily of two-story perimeter brick walls with wood interior wall and ceiling framing. The roofs are a flat built-up system with cap sheet, sloped for drainage. It is not apparent if the original exterior rear wall of the 1867 building remains within the interior of the current structure. It appears that the upstairs areas have been vacant for an extended period of time. A high level of integrity remains of the original twentieth century remodeling in the upstairs areas that is not reflected in the downstairs storefront areas.

The extant structure retains a high degree of integrity in the upper façade and in the upstairs interior, and remnants of the early first floor fabric remains. The evolution of the building coincided with the region's developing commerce in horticulture. The style is a simple but well executed implementation of Italian Renaissance Revival commercial architecture and in its original configuration with a façade of glazed white brick facing, signage and classical details, would have existed as a prominent building in San José's early commercial core area.

Significance

The building was designated a San José Historic Landmark in 2001. It is therefore automatically eligible for listing on the California Register of Historical Resources due to its status as a local designated landmark. The site was reviewed for eligibility in 1982 as a part of the nomination of the Downtown Commercial Historic District, and was determined eligible for local listing only. Although related to the period of significance of this district, its location as an individual structure was not sufficiently related to the adopted district to provide a unified streetscape. The building is significant for its association with broad patterns of commercial development, its association with significant personages of early San José, and for its design, as the work of the prominent regional architect Jacob Lenzen. The eligibility determination in 1982 was made without a review of these historical associations. With this supplementary information, it may be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A, B, and C.

The site is directly to the rear of the St. Joseph's Cathedral, and potentially related to early activities of St. Joseph's Catholic Church prior to statehood. The *Sanjon* transected the site along its western edge. The potential for eligibility of this site for the California Register due to this association was not evaluated as a part of this overview.

Duval, C. and F. Maggi, *Historical and Architectural Evaluation for an Existing Commercial Building located at 83-91 South First Street, San José*, prepared for Barry Swenson Builder, 2000.

Laffey, G.A., 83-91 S First St. DPR, 1991.

San Jose Mercury Herald, "More Building," 1 February 1893.

San Jose Mercury Herald, "J. Lenzen Building Many New Homes," 5 January 1908.

Sutton, G., photographs along South First Street, July 4, 1909, on file at Glory Anne Laffey Architectural Archive.